

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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VIXEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c. &c.

CHAPTER I. A PRETTY HORSEBREAKER.

THE moon had newly risen, a late October moon, a pale silvery crescent, above the dark pine spires in the thicket through which Roderick Vawdrey came, gun in hand, after a long day's rabbit-shooting. It was not his nearest way home, but he liked the broad clearing in the pine wood, which had a ghostly look at dusk, and was so still and lonely that the dart of a squirrel through the fallen leaves was a startling event. Here and there a sturdy young oak that had been newly stripped of its bark lay across the track, like the pale corpse of a giant. Here and there a tree had been cut down and slung across the track, ready for barking. The ground was soft and spongy, slippery with damp dead leaves, and inclined in a general way to bogginess; but it was ground that Roderick Vawdrey had known all his life, and it seemed more natural to him than any other spot upon mother earth.

On the edge of this thicket there was a broad ditch, with more mud and dead fern in it than water, and beyond the ditch the fence that enclosed Squire Tempest's domain—an old manor house in the heart of the New Forest. It had been an abbey before the Reformation, and was still best known as the Abbey House.

"I wonder whether I'm too late to catch her?" speculated Roderick, shifting his bag from one shoulder to the other; "she's no end of fun."

At the end of the clearing there was a broad five-barred gate, and beside the gate a keeper's cottage. The flame of a newly-

lighted candle flashed out suddenly upon the autumn dusk, while Roderick stood looking at the gate.

"I'll ask at the lodge," he said; "I should like to say good-bye to the little thing before I go back to Oxford."

He walked quickly on to the gate. The keeper's children were playing at nothing particular just inside it.

"Has Miss Tempest gone for her ride this afternoon?" he asked.

"Ya-ase," drawled the eldest shock-headed youngster.

"And not come back yet?"

"Noa. If she don't take care she'll be bogged."

Roderick hitched his bag on to the top of the gate, and stood at ease waiting. It was late for the little lady of Tempest Manor to be out on her pony, but then it was an understood thing within a radius of ten miles or so that she was a self-willed young person, and even at fifteen years of age had a knack of following her own inclination with that noble disregard of consequences which characterises the heaven-born ruler.

Mr. Vawdrey had not waited more than ten minutes when there came the thud of hoofs upon the soft track, a flash of grey in the distance, something flying over those forky branches sprawling across the way, then a half-sweet, half-shrill call, like a bird's, at which the keeper's children scattered themselves like a brood of scared chickens, and now a rush, and a grey pony shooting suddenly into the air and coming down on the other side of the gate, as if he were a new kind of skyrocket.

"What do you think of that, Rorie?" cried the shrill, sweet voice of the grey pony's rider; "a clean jump, eh?"

"I'm ashamed of you, Vixen," said Roderick, "you'll come to a bad end some of these days."

"I don't care if I do, as long as I get my fling first," replied Vixen, tossing her tawny mane.

She was a slim little thing, in a short Lincoln-green habit. She had a small pale face, brown eyes that sparkled with life and mischief, and a rippling mass of reddish-anburn hair falling down her back under a coquettish little felt hat.

"Hasn't your mamma forbidden jumping, Vixen?" remonstrated Roderick, opening the gate and coming in.

"Yes, that she has, sir," said the sober old groom, riding up at a jog-trot on his thickset brown cob. "It's quite against Mrs. Tempest's orders, and it's a great responsibility to go out with Miss Violet. She will do it."

"You mean the pony will do it, Badger," cried Vixen. "I don't jump. How can I help it if papa has given me a jumping pony? If I didn't let Titmouse take a gate when he was in the humour, he'd kick like old boots, and pitch me a cropper. It's an instinct of self-preservation that makes me let him jump. And as for poor dear, pretty little mamma," continued Vixen, addressing herself to Roderick, and changing her tone to one of patronising tenderness, "if she had her way, I should be brought up in a little box wrapped in jeweller's wool to keep me safe. But you see I take after papa, Rorie; and it comes as natural to me to fly over gates as it does to you to get ploughed for smalls. There, Badger," jumping off the pony, "you may take Titmouse home, and I'll come presently and give him some apples, for he has been a dear, darling, precious treasure of a ponykins."

She emphasised this commendation with a kiss on Titmouse's grey nose, and handed the bridle to Badger.

"I'm going to walk home with Mr. Vawdrey," she said.

"But, Vixen, I can't, really," said Roderick; "I'm due at home at this moment, only I couldn't leave without saying good-bye to little Vix."

"And you're over due at Oxford, too, aren't you?" cried Vixen, laughing; "you're always due somewhere—never in the right place. But whether you are due or not, you're coming up to the stables with me to give Titmouse his apples, and then you're coming to dine with us on your last night at home. I

insist upon it; papa insists; mamma insists—we all insist."

"My mother will be as angry as——"

"Old boots!" interjected Vixen. "That's the best comparison I know."

"Awfully vulgar for a young lady."

"You taught it me. How can I help being vulgar when I associate with you? You should hear Miss McCroke preach at me—sermons so long"—here Vixen extended her arms to the uttermost—"and I'm afraid they'd make as much impression on Titmouse as they do upon me. But she's a dear old thing, and I love her immensely."

This was always Vixen's way, making up for all shortcomings with the abundance of her love. The heart was always atoning for the errors of the head.

"I wouldn't be Miss McCroke for anything. She must have a bad time of it with you."

"She has," assented Vixen, with a remorseful sigh; "I fear I'm bringing her sandy hairs in sorrow to the grave. That hair of hers never could be grey, you know, it's too self-opinionated in its sandiness. Now come along, Rorie, do. Titmouse will be stamping about his box like a maniac if he doesn't get those apples."

She gave a little tug with both her small doeskin-covered hands at Roderick's arm. He was still standing by the gate irresolute, inclination drawing him to the Abbey House, duty calling him home to Briarwood, five miles off, where his widowed mother was expecting his return.

"My last night at home, Vix," he said remonstrantly; "I really ought to dine with my mother."

"Of course you ought, and that's the very reason why you'll dine with us. So 'Kim over now,' as Badger says to the horses. I don't know what there is for dinner," she added confidentially, "but I feel sure it's something nice. Dinner is papa's strong point, you know. He's very weak about dinner."

"Not so weak as he is about you, Vixen."

"Do you really think papa is as fond of me as he is of his dinner?"

"I'm sure of it!"

"Then he must be very fond of me," exclaimed Vixen, with conviction. "Now, are you coming?"

Who could resist those little soft hands in doeskin? Certainly not Rorie. He resigned himself to the endurance of his

mother's anger in the future as a price to be paid for the indulgence of his inclination in the present, gave Vixen his arm, and turned his face towards the Abbey House.

They walked through shrubberies that would have seemed a pathless wilderness to a stranger, but every turn in which was familiar to these two. The ground was undulating, and vast thickets of rhododendron and azalea rose high above them, or sank in green valleys below their path. Here and there a group of tall firs towered skyward above the dark entanglement of shrubs, or a great beech spread its wide limbs over the hollows; here and there a pool of water reflected the pale moonshine.

The house lay low, sheltered and shut in by those rhododendron thickets, a long rambling pile of building, which had been added to, and altered, and taken away from, and added to again like that well-known puzzle in mental arithmetic, which used to amuse us in our childhood. It was all gables, and chimney-stacks, and odd angles, and ivy-mantled wall, and richly-mullioned windows, or quaint little diamond-paned lattices, peeping like a watchful eye from under the shadow of a jutting cornice. The stables had been added in Queen Elizabeth's time, after the monks had been routed from their snug quarters, and the Abbey had been bestowed upon one of the Tudor favourites. These Elizabethan stables formed the four sides of a quadrangle, stone paved, with an old marble basin in the centre—a basin which the vicar pronounced to be an early Saxon font, but which Squire Tempest refused to have removed from the place it had occupied ever since the stables were built. There were curious carvings upon the six sides, but so covered with mosses and lichens that nobody could tell what they meant; and the squire forbade any scraping process by officious antiquarians, which might lead to somebody's forcible appropriation of the ancient basin.

The squire was not so modern in his ideas as to set up his own gasometer, so the stables were lighted by lanterns, with an oil lamp fixed here and there against the wall. Into this dim uncertain light came Roderick and Vixen through the deep stone archway which opened from the shrubbery into the stable-yard, and which was solid enough for the gate of a fortified town.

Titmouse's stable was lighted better than the rest. The door stood open, and

there was Titmouse, with the neat little quilted doeskin saddle still on his back, waiting to be fed and petted by his young mistress. It was a pretty picture, the old low-ceiled stable, with its wide stalls and roomy loose boxes, and carpet of plaited straw, golden against the deep brown of the woodwork.

Vixen ran into the box, and took off Titmouse's bridle, he holding down his head, like a child submitting to be undressed. Then, with many vigorous tugs at straps and buckles, and a good deal of screwing up of her rosy lips in the course of the effort, Vixen took off her pony's saddle.

"I like to do everything I can for him," she explained, as Rorie watched her with an amused smile; "I'd wisp him down if they'd let me."

She left the leather panel on Titmouse's back, hung up saddle and bridle, and skipped off to a corn-chest to hunt for apples. Of these she brought half-a-dozen or so in the skirt of her habit, and then, swinging herself lightly into a comfortable corner of the manger, began to carry out her system of reward for good conduct, with much coquetry on her part and Titmouse's, Rorie watching it all from the empty stall adjoining, his folded arms resting on the top of the partition. He said not another word about his mother, or the duty that called him home to Briarwood, but stood and watched this pretty horsebreaker in a dreamy contentment.

What was Violet Tempest, otherwise Vixen, like, this October evening, just three months before her fifteenth birthday? She made a lovely picture in this dim light, as she sat in the corner of the old manger, holding a rosy-cheeked apple at a tantalising distance from Titmouse's nose; but she was perhaps not altogether lovely. She was brilliant rather than absolutely beautiful. The white skin was powdered with freckles. The rippling hair was too warm an auburn to escape an occasional unfriendly remark from captious critics, but it was not red hair for all that. The eyes were brownest of the brown, large, bright, and full of expression. The mouth was a thought too wide, but it was a lovely mouth notwithstanding. The lips were full and firmly moulded—lips that could mean anything, from melting tenderness to sternest resolve. Such lips, a little parted to show the whitest, evenest teeth in Hampshire, seemed to Rorie lovely enough to please the most critical connoisseur of feminine beauty. The nose was short

and straight, but had a trick of tilting itself upward with a little impatient jerk that made it seem *retroussé*; the chin was round and full and dimpled; the throat was full and round also, a white column supporting the tawny head, and indicated that Vixen was meant to be a powerful woman, and not one of those ethereal nymphs who lend themselves most readily to the decorative art of a court milliner.

"I'm afraid Violet will be a dreadfully large creature," Mrs. Tempest murmured plaintively, as the girl grew and flourished; that lady herself being ethereal, and considering her own appearance a strictly correct standard of beauty. How could it be otherwise, when she had been known before her marriage as "the pretty Miss Calthorpe."

"This is very nice, you know, Vixen," said Roderick, critically, as Titmouse made a greedy snap at an apple, and was repulsed with a gentle pat on his nose, "but it can't go on for ever; what'll you do when you are grown up?"

"Have a horse instead of a pony," answered Vixen, unhesitatingly.

"And will that be all the difference?"

"I don't see what other difference there can be. I shall always love papa, I shall always love hunting, I shall always love mamma—as much as she'll let me. What difference can a few more birthdays make in me? I shall be too big for Titmouse, that's the only misfortune; but I shall always keep him for my pet, and I'll have a basket-carriage and drive him when I go to see my poor people. Sitting behind a pony is an awful bore when one's natural place is on his back, but I'd sooner endure it than let Titmouse fancy himself superannuated."

"But when you're grown up you'll have to come out, Vixen. You'll be obliged to go to London for a season, and be presented, and go to no end of balls, and ride in the Row, and make a grand marriage, and have a page all to yourself in the Court Journal."

"Catch me—going to London!" exclaimed Vixen, ignoring the latter part of the sentence. "Papa hates London, and so do I. And as to riding in Rotten Row, *je voudrais bien me voir faisant cela*," added Vixen, whose study of the French language chiefly resulted in the endeavour to translate English slang into that tongue. "No, when I grow up I shall take papa the tour of Europe. We'll see all those places I'm worried about at lessons—

Marathon, Egypt, Naples, the Peloponnesus, tout le tremblement, and I shall say to each of them, 'Oh this is you, is it? What a nuisance you've been to me on the map.' We shall go up Mount Vesuvius, and the Pyramids, and do all sorts of wild things; and by the time I come home I shall have forgotten the whole of my education."

"If Miss McCroke could hear you!"

"She does, often. You can't imagine the wild things I say to her. But I love her—fondly."

A great bell clanged out with a vigorous peal, that seemed to shake the old stable.

"There's the first bell; I must run and dress. Come to the drawing-room and see mamma."

"But, Vixen, how can I sit down to dinner in such a costume?" remonstrated Rorie, looking down at his brown shooting suit, leather gaiters, and tremendous boots,—boots which, instead of being beautified with blacking, were suppled with tallow. "I can't do it, really."

"Nonsense," cried Vixen, "what does it matter? Papa seldom dresses for dinner. I believe he considers it a sacrifice to mamma's sense of propriety when he washes his hands after coming in from the home farm. And you are only a boy—I beg pardon—an undergraduate. So come along."

"But, upon my word, Vixen, I feel too much ashamed of myself."

"I've asked you to dinner, and you've accepted," cried Vixen, pulling him out of the stable by the lappel of his shooting-jacket.

He seemed to relish that mode of locomotion, for he allowed himself to be pulled all the way to the hall-door, and into the glow of the great big fire; a ruddy light which shone upon many a sporting trophy, and reflected itself on many a gleaming pike and cuirass, belonging to days of old, when gentlemanly sport for the most part meant man-hunting.

It was a fine old vaulted hall, a place to love and remember lovingly when far away. The walls were all of darkly bright oak paneling, save where here and there a square of tapestry hung before a door, or a painted window let in the moonlight. At one end there was a great arched fireplace, the arch surmounted with Squire Tempest's armorial bearings, roughly cut in freestone. A mailed figure of the usual stumpy build, in helm and hauberk, stood on each side of the hearth; a large three-cornered chair covered with stamped and

gilded leather was drawn up to the fire-side, the squire's favourite seat on an autumn or winter afternoon. The chair was empty now, but, stretched at full length before the blazing logs, lay the squire's chosen companion, Nip, a powerful liver-coloured pointer; and beside him, in equally luxurious rest, reclined Argus, Vixen's mastiff. There was a story about Vixen and the mastiff, involving the only incident in that young lady's life the recollection whereof could make her blush.

The dog, apparently coiled in deepest slumber, heard the light footsteps on the hall-floor, pricked up his tawny ears, sprang to his feet, and bounded over to his young mistress, whom he nearly knocked down in the warmth of his welcome. Nip, the pointer, blinked at the intruders, yawned desperately, stretched himself a trifle longer, and relapsed into slumber.

"How fond that brute is of you," said Rorie; "but it's no wonder, when one considers what you did for him."

"If you say another word I shall hate you," cried Vixen, savagely.

"Well, but you know when a fellow fights another fellow's battles, the other fellow's bound to be fond of him; and when a young lady pitches into a bird-boy with her riding-whip to save a mastiff pup from ill-usage, that mastiff pup is bound——"

"Mamma," cried Vixen, flinging aside a tapestry portière, and bouncing into the drawing-room, "here's Roderick, and he's come to dinner, and you must excuse his shooting dress, please; I'm sure pa will."

"Certainly, my dear Violet," replied a gentle trainante voice from the fire-lit dimness near the velvet-curtained hearth. "Of course I am always glad to see Mr. Vawdrey when your papa asks him. Where did you meet the squire, Roderick?"

"Upon my word, Mrs. Tempest," faltered Rorie, coming slowly forward into the ruddy glow, "I feel quite awfully ashamed of myself; I've been rabbit-shooting, and I'm a most horrid object. It wasn't the squire asked me. It was Vixen."

Vixen made a ferocious grimace at him—he could just see her distorted countenance in the firelight—and further expressed her aggravation by a smart crack of her whip.

"Violet, my love, you have such startling ways," exclaimed Mrs. Tempest, with a long-suffering air. "Really, Miss

McCroke, you ought to try and correct her of those startling ways."

On this Roderick became aware of a stout figure in a Tartan dress, knitting industriously on the side of the hearth opposite Mrs. Tempest's sofa. He could just see the flash of those active needles, and could just hear Miss McCroke murmur placidly that she had corrected Violet, and that it was no use.

Rorie remembered that plaid poplin dress when he was at Eton. It was a royal Stuart, too brilliant to be forgotten. He used to wonder whether it would ever wear out, or whether it was not made of some indestructible tissue, like asbestos—a fabric that neither time nor fire could destroy.

"It was Rorie's last night, you see, mamma," apologised Vixen, "and I knew you and papa would like him to come, and that you wouldn't mind his shooting clothes a bit, though they do make him look like the under-keeper, except that the under-keeper's better looking than Rorie, and has finished growing his whiskers, instead of living in the expectation of them."

And, with this Parthian shot, Vixen made a pirouette on her neat little morocco-shod toes, and whisked herself out of the room, leaving Roderick Vawdrey to make the best of his existence for the next twenty minutes with the two women he always found it most difficult to get on with Mrs. Tempest and Miss McCroke.

The logs broke into a crackling blaze just at this moment, and lighted up that luxurious hearth and the two figures beside it.

It was the prettiest thing imaginable in the way of a drawing-room, that spacious low-ceiled chamber in the Abbey House.

The oak paneling was painted white, a barbarity on the part of those modern Goths the West-End decorators, but a charming background for quaint Venetian mirrors, hanging shelves of curious old china, dainty little groups of richly-bound duodecimos, brackets, bronzes, freshest flowers in majolica jars; water-colour sketches by Hunt, Prout, Cattermole, and Duncan; sage-green silk curtains; black-and-gold furniture, and all the latest prettinesses of the new Jacobean school. The mixture of real mediævalism and modern quaintness was delightful. One hardly knew where the rococo began or the mediæval left off. The good old square fireplace, with its projecting canopy, and

columns in white and coloured marbles, was as old as the days of Inigo Jones; but the painted tiles, with their designs from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* after Dante Rossetti, were the newest thing from Minton's factory.

Even Rorie felt that the room was pretty, though he did above all things abhor to be trapped in it, as he found himself this October evening.

"There's a great lot of rubbish in it," he used to say of Mrs. Tempest's drawing-room, "but it's rather nice altogether."

Mrs. Tempest, at five-and-thirty, still retained the good looks which had distinguished Miss Calthorpe at nineteen. She was small and slim, with a delicate complexion; soft blue eyes, a limpid innocent azure; regular features, rosebud lips, hands after Velasquez; and an unexceptionable taste in dress, the selection of which formed one of the most onerous occupations of her life. To attire herself becomingly, and to give the squire the dinners he best liked, in an order of succession so dexterously arranged as never to provoke satiety, were Mrs. Tempest's cardinal duties. In the intervals of her life she read modern poetry, French novels, and reviews; did a little high-art needlework, played Mendelssohn's *Lieder*, sang three French chansons which her husband liked, slept, and drank orange pekoe. In the consumption of this last article Mrs. Tempest was as bad as a dram-drinker. She declared her inability to support life without that gentle stimulant, and required to be wound up at various hours of her languid day with a dose of her favourite beverage.

"I think I'll take a cup of tea," was Mrs. Tempest's inevitable remark at every crisis of her existence.

"And so you are going back to Oxford, Roderick?" the lady began with a languid kindness.

Mrs. Tempest had never been known to be unkind to any one. She regarded all her fellow-creatures with a gentle tolerance. They were there, a necessary element of the universe, and she bore with them. But she had never attached herself particularly to anybody except the squire. Him she adored. He took all the trouble of life off her hands, and gave her all good things. She had been poor, and he had made her rich; nobody, and he had elevated her into somebody. She loved him with a canine fidelity, and felt towards him as a dog feels towards his master—

that in him this round world begins and ends.

"Yes," assented Rorie, with a sigh, "I'm going up to-morrow."

"Why up?" enquired Miss McCroke, without lifting her eyes from her needles. "It isn't up on the map."

"I hope you are going to get a grand degree," continued Mrs. Tempest, in that soft conciliatory voice of hers; "Senior Wrangler, or something."

"That's the other shop," exclaimed Rorie; "they grow that sort of timber at Cambridge. However, I hope to pull myself through somehow or other this time, for my mother's sake. She attaches a good deal of importance to it, though for my own part I can't see what good it can do me. It won't make me farm my own land better, or ride straighter to hounds, or do my duty better to my tenants."

"Education," said Miss McCroke, sententiously, "is always good, and we cannot too highly estimate its influence upon—"

"Oh yes, I know," answered Rorie, quickly, for he knew that when the flood-gates of Miss McCroke's eloquence were once loosened the tide ran strong, "when house and lands are gone and spent a man may turn usher in an academy, and earn fifty pounds a year and his laundress's bill by grinding Cæsar's Commentaries into small boys. But I shouldn't lay in a stock of learning with that view. When my house and lands are gone I'll go after them—emigrate, and go into the lumber trade in Canada."

"What a dreadful idea," said Mrs. Tempest, "but you are not going to lose house and lands, Roderick—such a nice place as Briarwood."

"To my mind it's rather a commonplace hole," answered the young man, carelessly, "but the land is some of the best in the county."

It must be nearly seven by this time, he thought. He was getting through this period of probation better than he had expected. Mrs. Tempest gave a little stifled yawn behind her huge black fan, upon which cupids and graces were depicted dancing in the airiest attitudes, after Boucher. Roderick would have liked to yawn in concert, but at this juncture a sudden ray of light flashed upon him and showed him a way of escape.

"I think I'll go to the gentlemen's room, and make myself decent before the second bell rings," he said.

"Do," assented Mrs. Tempest, with another yawn, and the young man fled.

He had only time to scramble through a hurried toilet, and was still feeling very doubtful as to the parting of his short crisp hair, when the gong boomed out its friendly summons. The gentlemen's room opened out from the hall, and Rorie heard the squire's loud and jovial voice uplifted as he raised the tapestry curtain.

Mr. Tempest was standing in front of the log fire, pulling Vixen's auburn hair. The girl had put on a picturesque brown velvet frock. A scarlet sash was tied loosely round her willowy waist, and a scarlet ribbon held back the loose masses of her bright hair.

"A study in red and brown," thought Rorie, as the fire-glow lit up the picture of the squire in his hunting dress, and the girl in her warm velvet gown.

"Such a run, Rorie," cried the squire; "we dawdled about among the furze from twelve till four doing nothing, and just as it was getting dark started a stag up on the high ground this side of Pickett's Post, and ran him nearly into Ringwood. Go in and fetch my wife, Rorie. Oh, here she is"—as the portière was lifted by a white ringed hand—"you must excuse me sitting down in pink to-day, Pamela; I only got in as the gong began to sound, and I'm as hungry as the proverbial hunter."

"You know I always think you handsomest in your red coat, Edward," replied the submissive wife, "but I hope you're not very muddy."

"I won't answer for myself, but I haven't been actually up to my neck in a bog."

Rorie offered his arm to Mrs. Tempest, and they all went in to dinner, the squire still playing with his daughter's hair, and Miss McCroke bringing up the rear solemnly.

The dining-room at the Abbey House was the ancient refectory, large enough for a mess-room, so when there were no visitors the Tempests dined in the library, a handsome square room, in which old family portraits looked down from the oak paneling above the dwarf bookcases, and in which the literary element was not obtrusively conspicuous. You felt that it was a room quite as well adapted for conviviality as for study. There was a cottage piano in a snug corner by the fireplace. The squire's capacious arm-chair stood on

the other side of the hearth, Mrs. Tempest's low chair and gipsy table facing it. The old oak buffet opposite the chimney-piece was a splendid specimen of Elizabethan carving, and made a rich background for the squire's racing-cups and a pair of Oliver Cromwell tankards, plain and unornamental as that illustrious roundhead himself.

It was a delightful room on a chill October evening like this; the logs roaring up the wide chimney, a pair of bronze candelabra lighting the room and table, Mrs. Tempest smiling pleasantly at her unbidden guest, and the squire stooping, red-faced and plethoric, over his mulligatawny; while Vixen, who was at an age when dinner is a secondary consideration, was amusing herself with the dogs, gentlemanly animals, too well bred to be importunate in their demands for an occasional tid-bit, and content to lie in superb attitudes, looking up at the eaters with supplication in their great pathetic brown eyes.

"Rorie is going up to-morrow—not in a balloon, but to Magdalen College, Oxford—so, as this was his last night, I made him come to dinner," explained Vixen, presently. "I hope I didn't do wrong?"

"Rorie knows he's always welcome. Have some more of that mulligatawny, my lad, it's uncommonly good."

Rorie declined the mulligatawny, being at this moment deeply engaged in watching Vixen and the dogs. Nip, the liver-coloured pointer, was performing his celebrated statue feat. With his forelegs stiffly extended, and his head proudly poised, he simulated a dog of marble; and if it had not been for the occasional bumping of his tail upon the Persian carpet, in an irresistible wag of self-approbation, the simulation would have been perfect.

"Look, papa! isn't it beautiful? I went out of the room the other day, while Nip was doing the statue, after I'd told him not to move a paw, and I stayed away quite five minutes, and then stole quietly back; and there he was, lying as still as if he'd been carved out of stone. Wasn't that fidelity?"

"Nonsense!" cried the squire. "But how do you know that Nip didn't wind you as you opened the door, and get himself into position? What are these?" as the old silver entrée dishes came round. "Stewed eels? You never forget my tastes, Pamela."

"Stewed eels, sir; sole maître d'hôtel,"

said the butler, in the usual suppressed and deferential tone.

Rorie helped himself automatically, and went on looking at Vixen.

Her praises of Nip had kindled zealous fires in the breast of Argus, her own particular favourite; and the blunt black muzzle had been thrust vehemently under her velvet sleeve.

"Argus is angry," said Rorie.

"He's a dear old foolish thing to be jealous," answered Vixen, "when he knows I'd go through fire and water for him."

"Or even fight a big boy!" cried the squire, throwing himself back in his chair with the unctuous laughter of a man who is dining well, and knows it.

Vixen blushed rosiest red at the allusion.

"Papa, you oughtn't to say such things," she cried; "I was a little bit of a child then."

"Yes, and flew at a great boy of fourteen and licked him," exclaimed the squire, rapturously. "You know the story, don't you, Rorie?"

Rorie had heard it twenty times, but looked the picture of ignorant expectancy.

"You know how Vixen came by Argus? What, you don't? Well, I'll tell you. This little yellow-haired lass of mine was barely nine years old, and she was riding through the village on her pony, with young Stubbs behind her on the sorrel mare—and, you know, to her dying day, that sorrel would never let anyone dismount her quietly. Now what does Vixen spy but a lubberly lad and a lot of small children ill-using a mastiff pup. They'd tied a tin-kettle to the brute's tail, and were doing their best to drown him. There's a pond just beyond Mrs. Farley's cottage, you know, and into that pond they'd driven the puppy, and wouldn't let him get out of it. As fast as he scrambled up the muddy bank they drove him back into the water."

"Papa, darling," pleaded Vixen, despairingly, "Rorie has heard it all a thousand times before. Haven't you now, Rorie?"

"It's as new to me as to-morrow's Times," said Roderick, with effrontery.

"Vixen was off the pony before you could say 'Jack Robinson.' She flew into the midst of the dirty little ragamuffins, seized the biggest by the collar, and trundled him backwards into the pond; then laid about her right and left with her whip till the wretches scampered off, leaving Vixen and the puppy masters of

the situation, and by this time the sorrel mare had allowed Stubbs to get off her, and Stubbs came up to her rescue. The young ringleader had been too much surprised by his ducking to pull himself together again before this, but he came up to time now, and had it out with Stubbs, while the sorrel was doing as much damage as she conveniently could to Mrs. Farley's palings. 'Don't quite kill him, please, Stubbs,' cried Vixen, 'although he richly deserves it;' and then she took the muddy little beast up in her arms and ran home, leaving her pony to fate and Stubbs. Stubbs told me the whole story, with tears in his eyes. 'Who'd ha' thought, squire, the little lady would ha' been such a game 'un,' said Stubbs."

"It's very horrid of you, papa, to tell such silly old stories," remonstrated Vixen. "That was nearly seven years ago, and Dr. Dewsnapp told us that everybody undergoes a complete change of—what is it?—all the tissues—in seven years. I'm not the same Vixen that pushed the boy into the pond. There's not a bit of her left in me."

And so the dinner went on and ended, with a good deal of distraction, caused by the dogs, and a mild little remark now and then from Mrs. Tempest, or a wise interjection now and then from Miss McCroke, who, in a manner represented the Goddess of Wisdom in this somewhat frivolous family, and came in with a corrective and solemnly rational observation when the talk was drifting towards idiocy.

The filberts, bloomy purple grapes, and ruddy pippins, and yellow William pears, had gone their rounds—all home produce—and had been admired and praised, and the squire's full voice was mellowing after his second glass of port, when the butler came in with a letter on a salver, and brought it, with muffled footfall and solemn visage, as of one who carried a death-warrant, to Roderick Vawdrey.

The young man looked at it as if he had encountered an unexpected visitor of the adder tribe.

"My mother," he faltered.

It was a large and handsome letter with a big red seal.

"May I?" asked Rorie, with a troubled visage, and having received his host's and hostess's assent, broke the seal.

"DEAR RODERICK,—Is it quite kind of you to absent yourself on this your last night at home? I feel very sure that this will find you at the Abbey

House, and I send the brougham at a venture. Be good enough to come home at once. The Dovedales arrived at Ashbourne quite unexpectedly this afternoon, and are dining with me on purpose to see you before you go back to Oxford. If your own good feeling did not urge you to spend this last evening with me, I wonder that Mr. and Mrs. Tempest were not kind enough to suggest to you which way your duty lay.—Yours anxiously,

“JANE VAWDREY.”

Roderick crumpled the letter with an angry look. That fling at the Tempests hit him hard. Why was it that his mother was always so ready to find fault with these chosen friends of his?

“Anything wrong, Rorie?” asked the squire.

“Nothing; except that the Dovedales are dining with my mother, and I’m to go home directly.”

“If you please, ma’am, Master Vawdrey’s servant has come for him,” said Vixen, mimicking the style of announcement at a juvenile party. “It’s quite too bad, Rorie,” she went on, “I had made up my mind to beat you at pyramids, but I daresay you’re very glad to have the chance of seeing your pretty cousin before you leave Hampshire.”

But Rorie shook his head dolefully, made his adieux, and departed.

THE WINTER'S TALE.

CERTAIN of the ingredients of his comedy of *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare discovered in Robert Green's *Pandosto*, a very popular novel, first published about 1588, and many times reprinted. Whether Green invented, or in his turn borrowed his story, has not been ascertained. He was a cultivated writer, a graduate of both universities, skilled in ancient learning and in modern languages, and possessed of a fertile fancy and a graceful style; his career as an author closed as Shakespeare's commenced. *Pandosto* boasts, further, the cumbersome title of *The Triumph of Time*, wherein is discovered by a Pleasant History that although by the means of Sinister Fortune Truth may be concealed, yet by Time, in spite of Fortune, it is most manifestly revealed. This “pleasant history” sets forth the adventures of Dorastus and Fawnia, who correspond with the characters of Florizel and Perdita in the play. *Pandosto* is king of Bohemia, whose

“brightera of prosperity” is “darkened with the misty clouds of mishap and misery,” owing to the visit of his old friend Egistus, king of Sycilia. *Pandosto* becomes jealous; he calls to mind “the beauty of his wife, Bellaria, the comeliness and bravery of his friend Egistus, thinking that love was above all laws and therefore to be stayed with no law, that it was hard to put fire and flax together without burning.” Shakespeare has given new names to all the characters, and has changed the scene of action. His jealous king rules over Sicily, his injured friend comes from Bohemia. Shakespeare has adopted Green's error, however, and regarded Bohemia as a maritime country. He either knew no better, or he did not care to be accurate. He was telling a fanciful story, and the violation of fact here and there seemed to him of the slightest consequence. Sir Thomas Hanmer, in his edition of Shakespeare, 1744, first proposed that Bithynia should be substituted for Bohemia; an ingenious suggestion, of which Garrick and Charles Kean availed themselves in their acting editions of the play. But it is clear that Shakespeare followed Green, and was content to ascribe a sea-coast to Bohemia; it is less certain that he knew anything about Bithynia. Time out of mind Bohemia has been a land of romance, in which all kinds of occurrences become at least possibilities, even including sea-storms and shipwrecks.

Shakespeare borrowed great portions of the Fable of *Pandosto*, although he scarcely adopted a hint for his descriptions or a line for his dialogue; and he supplied a new conclusion. Bellaria really dies where Hermione only seems to die; there is no statue scene in the novel, nor does Autolycus figure in its pages; and Green's catastrophe is of a gross and clumsy sort. *Pandosto* unwittingly falls in love with his own daughter, and then moved with desperate thoughts, and “to close up the comedie with a tragical stratageme,” suddenly commits suicide: Dorastus carrying the “dead corps” of his father-in-law into Bohemia to be “sumptuouslie intombbed.” In this, as in other instances, Shakespeare found his subject common frieze and left it cloth of gold. As for the other sources of *The Winter's Tale*, Mr. Carew Hazlitt conjectures that Shakespeare may have “had an eye” to Gascoigne's paraphrase of the *Phoenissa* of Euripides, presented at Gray's Inn in 1566, and have found hints

for the character of Autolycus in Newbery's Book of Dives Pragmaticus, 1563.

There is no edition of *The Winter's Tale* earlier than that of the folio in 1623. The comedy is believed to have been represented by the king's players at the Globe Theatre in 1611, and at Hampton Court in 1613. Ten years later *The Winter's Tale* was performed at Whitehall for the entertainment of the Duchess of Richmond in the king's absence. An entry in the papers of Sir H. Herbert, Master of the Revels at this time, relates to a public representation of the comedy in August, 1623. "For the king's players: An old play called *Winter's Tale*, formerly allowed of by Sir George Bucke, and likewise by me, on Mr. Hemmings his worde that ther was nothing profane added or performed, though the allowed booke was missinge; and therefore I returned it without a fee, this 19th of August, 1623." Hemmings, the actor, was then at the head of the king's troop of players.

The stage of the Restoration knew nothing of *The Winter's Tale*. It was indeed many long years before the play found its way again to the theatre; apparently it had been forgotten alike by players and public. At last, on the 15th January, 1741, the playbill of the little theatre in Goodman's Fields announced a performance of the *Winter's Tale*, "written by Shakespeare; not acted one hundred years." Mr. Giffard, the manager, appeared as Leontes, his wife as Hermione, his son as Florizel; Miss Hippiusley was the Perdita of the night; Mr. Yates played Autolycus. The theatre had no license; it professed to be a concert-room, the bills describing it as "the late theatre in Ayliffe Street." It was pretended that the public paid only to listen to a concert of vocal and instrumental music, and that the theatrical performances by persons "for their diversion," taking place between the parts of the concert, were presented gratis. In this way the manager hoped to evade the provisions of the New Licensing Act. It was not thought worth while to interfere with him for some seasons; but his enterprise was practically ruined by the extraordinary success of David Garrick, who first appeared in the Goodman's Fields Theatre on the 19th October, 1741. The patentees of the western theatres, alarmed at the departure of their audiences eastward, threatened Giffard with legal proceedings,

and compelled him to relinquish Garrick's services. Presently he had no alternative but to close his theatre.

Particulars of the performance of *The Winter's Tale* in Goodman's Fields cannot be related, but apparently the poet's text was respected, and success attended the representation. At any rate, a revival of the play now took place at Covent Garden. *The Winter's Tale* enjoyed five performances on successive nights in November, 1741, and was repeated in the following January. The Hermione was Mrs. Horton; Chapman played Autolycus, and Hippiusley, a very popular actor of low comedy, appeared as the clown.

Hitherto *The Winter's Tale* had escaped the hands of the adapters. It had been one of the very few of Shakespeare's plays which, after the great storm raised by the Puritans, so ruinous to so many plays, players, and play-houses, had succeeded in creeping back in an undamaged condition to the theatre. But in the year 1754, a certain Irish gentleman, Mr. McNamara Morgan, a close friend of Spranger Barry, the famous actor, operated cruelly upon the comedy, cutting it down into a two-act farce called *Florizel and Perdita*, or *The Sheepshearing*. From this production both Leontes and Hermione are omitted, and of course the earlier acts of the comedy are dispensed with. The scene is laid in Bithynia. Large additions are made to the character of Autolycus, and Perdita sings a new song, "Come, come, my good shepherds, our flocks we must shear." Little attempt is made to blend the new matter with the old, and Mr. Morgan's humour is often coarse and dull enough. Autolycus kisses the bride, Perdita, at the close of the play, and then sings a song he professes to have made "extrumpery" on the occasion. The success enjoyed by this farce was perhaps chiefly due in the first instance to the fact that the admired Barry played Florizel, while his pupil, pretty Miss Nossiter, appeared as Perdita. Mr. Morgan's adaptation, however, was repeated in subsequent seasons, and became almost a stock after-piece. At the Haymarket, in 1777, an extended version of the play was represented, with matter restored from Shakespeare and interpolations from Garrick's acting edition of *The Winter's Tale*.

It is hard to believe that Garrick was moved by any real reverence for Shakespeare at any time. The success of Mr. Morgan's handiwork probably

prompted his manipulation of *The Winter's Tale*; but Garrick had a sort of alacrity in tinkering Shakespeare. On the 21st January, 1756, he produced "a comedy altered from Shakespeare called *The Winter's Tale*, or *Florizel and Perdita*," with "a farce called *Catharine and Petruchio*, altered from the *Taming of a Shrew*;" and the two mangled plays were performed together twelve nights. Yet in a prologue to the altered *Winter's Tale*, Garrick professed:

'Tis my chief wish, my joy, my only plan,
To lose no drop of that immortal man.

It is clear, as a critic has noted, that Garrick had lost not a drop merely, but a whole tun of the poet in the instance under mention. Nor was he happier in his statement that the original play had long lain by, forsaken. It was convenient to forget the revivals at Goodman's Fields and Covent Garden, in 1741 and 1742. But the lapse of sixteen years which occurs in *The Winter's Tale* troubled Garrick, as it has never troubled anyone else. It jarred with his regard for classicality and the unities; moreover, he had great faith in himself as an improver of Shakespeare. Accordingly he suppressed the earlier acts of the original, and commenced his version of the play with a long speech by Camillo, narrating the jealousy of Leontes, the death of Hermione, and the abandonment of Perdita. He concludes with a statement that Leontes is expected to arrive presently in Bithynia. The ground is thus cleared for the fourth and fifth acts of the original; but much flat and dull matter of Garrick's own contriving is introduced, by way of explanation and to enhance the effect of the more comic scenes. The adaptation obtained success in performance, and kept its place upon the stage for many years. It was perhaps represented for the last time in 1795. Garrick played finely as Leontes, although by omitting the first two acts of the original he had greatly diminished the importance and effectiveness of the character. He was careful, however, to add new speeches to the statue scene, to afford Leontes some opportunity for passionate and elocutionary display. The Hermione was Mrs. Pritchard, the leading tragic actress of the time; Yates resumed the part of Autolycus; Holland appeared as Florizel, and Woodward as the clown. It was said of Mrs. Cibber, that her "neat simplicity in singing a song made Perdita appear of the greatest consequence." This

song seems to have been "Come, come, my good shepherds," borrowed from Morgan's version of the comedy. In Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Mrs. Thrale is related to have praised highly Garrick's talent for light gay poetry, quoting the song in *The Winter's Tale*, and dwelling "with peculiar pleasure" on the line:

I'd smile with the simple, and feed with the poor.

Thereupon Johnson observed: "Nay, my dear lady, this will never do. Poor David! Smile with the simple? What folly is that! And who would feed with the poor that can help it? No, no; let me smile with the wise and feed with the rich!" Boswell reports that he repeated this sally to Garrick, and "wondered to find his sensibility as a writer not a little irritated by it." Garrick was probably less irritated than Boswell imagined. Mrs. Thrale had incorrectly quoted Morgan's song. There is nothing so very foolish in the original lines:

The giant Ambition we never can dread;
Our roofs are too low for so lofty a head:
Content and sweet cheerfulness open our door;
They smile with the simple, and feed with the poor.

Garrick's acting version long banished the original text from the stage. In 1771, however, at Covent Garden Theatre, for one night only, *The Winter's Tale* was performed, "as written by Shakespeare." The words "Not acted for thirty years," headed the playbills. The occasion was the benefit of Mr. Hull, an actor of no great capacity, who deserves to be remembered, however, as the founder of the Theatrical Fund for the Relief of Distressed Players. On the night in question he "doubled" the parts of Camillo and the Chorus. Smith, to be afterwards famous as Charles Surface, figured as Leontes; Perdita was played by the beautiful Mrs. Bulkley; Quick appeared as the clown, a part he subsequently exchanged for that of Autolycus. For the benefit of Woodward, in 1774, Garrick's alteration was played with a farce, *The Citizen*, and a pantomime, *The Sylphs*, in addition. The entertainment, we are told, attracted considerable attention, the performance of three plays on the same night being at that time a most unusual occurrence.

A famous Perdita appeared upon the scene in 1779, when Garrick's alteration, after a rest of some ten years, was reproduced at Drury Lane. Mrs. Mary Robinson had been three years on the

stage, and had successfully personated Juliet, Viola, and Ophelia, and other heroines of the poetic drama. It is well known how the fascinations of her Perdita brought to her feet a real prince, if a very false lover. His affection lasted little longer than a year. The Winter's Tale had been represented by royal command. As Perdita entered the green-room, the jovial Mr. Smith, the Leontes of the night, complimented her upon her appearance. "By Heaven," he cried, "you will make a conquest of the Prince of Wales, for you look handsomer than ever!" The prince wrote letters to the actress, subscribing himself "Florizel." He sent her a small paper heart—the material was significant of his own worthlessness and flimsiness. On one side was written, "*Je ne change qu'en mourant*;" on the other a free translation, "Unalterable to my Perdita through life." The gentleman did protest too much. What a mockery seemed his vows of passion, after a very few months! It must be remembered, however, that he was but eighteen; she was two-and-twenty, a wife, and a mother. She appeared subsequently as Rosalind and Imogen, and in some few other parts, but after the season of 1779-80, she was no more seen upon the stage. Mrs. Hartley, an actress whose beauty was also famous, was the Hermione of Drury Lane in 1779. A performance of Garrick's adaptation, at Covent Garden, in 1783, was remarkable on account of the Leontes of Henderson and the Hermione of Mrs. Yates.

John Kemble's revival of Shakespeare's play at Drury Lane in March, 1802, seems to have finally put to rout Garrick's alteration. Great success attended the representation, which was remarkable for its histrionic force and its scenic splendour. As Hermione, Mrs. Siddons enjoyed one of her greatest triumphs, and the Leontes of Kemble received general applause. Charles Kemble appeared as Florizel, Downton as Antigonus, John Bannister as Antolycus, and Snett as the clown. The Paulina of Mrs. Powell was much admired. "The Perdita," writes Boaden in 1825, "was a very delicate and pretty young lady of the name of Hickes, thus much I remember of her; but whether she had more or fewer requisites than other candidates for this lovely character, I am now unable to decide." After Hermione Mrs. Siddons undertook no new characters: she was content to repeat her performances of familiar parts. Campbell

suggests that she had long foreseen the success in store for her Hermione, but had prudently reserved the character for "the years of her professional appearance when her form was become too matronly for the personation of juvenile heroines." "At the same time," he continues, "she still had beauty enough left to make her so perfect in the statue scene that assuredly there was never such a representation of Hermione. Mrs. Yates had a sculptural beauty that suited the statue, I have been told, as long as it stood still; but when she had to speak the charm was broken, and the spectators wished her back to her pedestal. Mrs. Siddons looked the statue even to literal illusion; and whilst the drapery hid her lower limbs, it showed a beauty of head, neck, shoulders and arms, that Praxiteles might have studied. . . . The heart of everyone who saw her when she burst from the semblance of sculpture into motion, and embraced her daughter Perdita, must throb at the recollection." Boaden describes her as resembling "one of the noblest statues that Grecian taste ever invented The drapery was ample in its folds, and seemingly stony in its texture. Upon the magical words pronounced by Paulina, 'Music, awake her: strike!' the sudden action of the head absolutely startled, as though such a miracle had really vivified the marble; and the descent from the pedestal was equally graceful and affecting."

An accident occurring during one of Mrs. Siddons's performances of Hermione had "very nearly," as she expressed it, "terminated all her exertions." She wrote describing the matter to her friend Mrs. FitzHugh. "Whilst I was standing for the statue in *The Winter's Tale*, my drapery flew over the lamps that were placed behind my pedestal; it caught fire, and had it not been for one of the scenemen, who most humanely crept on his knees and extinguished it, without my knowing anything of the matter, I might have been burnt to death, or, at all events, I should have been frightened out of my senses. Surrounded as I was with muslin, the flame would have run like wildfire. The bottom of the train was entirely burned. But for the man's promptitude it would seem as if my fate would have been inevitable. I have well rewarded the good man, and I regard my deliverance as a most gracious interposition of Providence." The sceneman had troubles of

his own, and the grateful actress was thus afforded an opportunity of serving him. His son, a soldier, had deserted, and rendered himself liable to very severe punishment. In another letter to Mrs. Fitz-Hugh, Mrs. Siddons mentions her efforts on his behalf. "I have written myself almost blind for the last three days, worrying everybody to get a poor young man, who otherwise bears a most excellent character, saved from the disgrace and hideous torture of the lash, to which he has exposed himself. I hope to God I shall succeed. It is the son of the man, by me ever to be blest, who saved my life in *The Winter's Tale*. The business has cost me a great deal of time, but if I attain my purpose I shall be richly paid."

A later *Hermione* was Miss Somerville, better known perhaps as Mrs. Bunn; while John Kemble's part of *Leontes* was assumed in due season by Young and Macready. A reproduction of the comedy at Drury Lane in 1823 was prefaced by the announcement: "Not acted eighteen years." The cast included Macready and Mrs. Bunn; Wallack appeared as *Florizel*; Munden as *Autolycus*; Harley as the clown; Mrs. W. West as *Perdita*; and Mrs. Glover as *Paulina*. Macready had first undertaken the character of *Leontes* at Bath in 1815, when he was but two-and-twenty. Assuming the direction of Covent-Garden Theatre in 1837, he commenced his managerial career by a careful revival of *The Winter's Tale*. Of his own performance he writes in his diary: "Acted *Leontes* artist-like, but not, until the last act, very effectively." *The Winter's Tale* was, of course, included among the Shakespearian revivals of Mr. Phelps during his tenancy of Sadler's Wells, and proved to be one of his most successful plays. His *Leontes* was supported by the *Hermione* of Mrs. Warner in the first instance; at a later date Miss Glyn personated the character.

On the 28th April, 1856, *The Winter's Tale* was presented at the Princess's Theatre, under the management of Mr. Charles Kean, who appeared as *Leontes* to the *Hermione* of Mrs. Kean. This was one of the grand revivals which at the time gave fame to the theatre, but which Macready, in his retirement, justly criticised when he said that the text allowed to be spoken was "more like a running commentary upon the spectacles exhibited than the scenic arrangements an illustration of the text." The play seemed subordinated to

the scene-painter and stage-decorator; the picture was overwhelmed by its frame. The poet's text, however, was strictly followed. Mr. Cole, the biographer of Charles Kean, hints, indeed, that both Kemble and Macready had availed themselves of Garrick's additions to the dialogue of the last scene. "As actors, they thought the parts of *Hermione* and *Leontes* heightened by having more to say at the close." In an address to the public issued on the eve of the revival, Mr. Kean stated that he had sought "by the united accessories of painting, music, and architecture, in conjunction with the rapid movements and multiplied life which belong to the stage alone, to re-embody the past, trusting that the combination might be considered less an exhibition of pageantry appealing to the eye than an illustration of history addressed to the understanding." Further, he urged that although spectacular effects had been introduced, it had only been where such were in accordance with the subject and incidents of the play. It must be said, however, that these "spectacular effects" were certainly excessive, and that the homeliness and simplicity of the theme oftentimes suffered from the weight of ornamentation and embellishment it was compelled to carry. But Mr. Kean was not only an actor, he was also an antiquarian and a devotee of *mise-en-scène*, of stage costume and upholstery. He was not deterred by the chronological contradictions of the original, which include reference to the Delphic oracle, to Christian burial, to an emperor of Russia, and an Italian painter of the sixteenth century. These discrepancies notwithstanding, he aimed at accuracy of dresses, furniture, and fittings. Viewing the incident of the decision pronounced by the Delphic oracle as "the pivot on which the story revolved, the corner-stone of the whole fabric," he adopted as the period of the play a time when Syracuse, according to Thucydides, had from a mere Doric colony increased in magnificence to a position in no way inferior to that of Athens herself at the summit of her political prosperity. "An opportunity is thus afforded," wrote Mr. Kean, "of reproducing a classical era, and placing before the eyes of the spectator, tableaux vivants of the private and public life of the Greeks, when the arts flourished to perfection," &c. Accordingly the first scene represented the temple of *Minerva* at Syracuse, with the fountain of *Arethusa* in

the foreground. In the second scene a royal banquet of the period was exhibited: Leontes and his guests, costumed to resemble the figures on ancient vases, and crowned with chaplets of roses in classical fashion, reclined upon couches amid a crowd of attendants, slaves, cup-bearers, female water-carriers, and boys "variously employed." Musicians played a hymn to Apollo, believed to be of authentic Greek origin, and thirty-six ballet-girls, representing youthful warriors in complete armour, performed the evolutions of the Pyrrhic dance with much brandishing of javelins and beating of shields. The second act reproduced the Gynaecitis, or women's apartments of the palace. The prison scene was "one of the Latomiae, or dungeons of Syracuse excavated out of the rock, and known as the Ear of Dionysius." In the third act appeared the public theatre of Syracuse, with its tiers of benches and crowds of spectators; the ark or chest conveying the oracle from Delphi was derived from an Egyptian example and a Pompeian painting. Bithynia was substituted for Bohemia, not so much out of regard for Sir Thomas Hanmer's suggestion, as because the change enabled the manager to represent the costume of the inhabitants of Asia Minor "at a corresponding period, associated so intimately with Greece, and acquiring additional interest from close proximity to the Homeric kingdom of Troy." The existence of a bear in the East to eat up Antigonus was justified by a reference to the second chapter of the Second Book of Kings. Time, as Chorus, no longer appeared a bald-headed elder, armed with scythe and hour-glass, but as the Cronos of the Greeks, a winged figure classically draped, bearing a key and sceptre. An allegorical tableau denoted the lapse of years between the events of the third and fourth acts: clouds filled the stage, dispersing to reveal Selene or Luna in her car, attended by the stars, all personified by living figures. These groups were imitative of Greek bas-reliefs relating to Endymion, and of paintings found in tombs at Canosa, &c. The chariot of Phœbus next arose, encircled by a blaze of light; the horses, of life size, modelled with great spirit; the design a reproduction of the central group on Flaxman's Shield of Achilles. In the fourth act was presented a pastoral scene in Bithynia with a distant view of the city of Nicæa on the lake Ascania, and the chain of lofty mountains

known as the Mysian Olympus. For the original "dance of twelve rustics habited as Satyrs," was substituted a Dionysiac festival by three hundred grotesque dancers and posture makers, to the music of flutes, cymbals, and drums. Maidens, garlanded with ivy, waved the thyrsus on high, or carried baskets of flowers or fruit. Men wearing masks, with goat or deerskins round their loins, their bodies smeared with ochre or vermilion, danced wildly, shrieked piercingly, signifying extravagant joy or boisterous intoxication. In the last act were views of the Palace Gardens of Leontes, from a drawing found at Herculaneum, and of the tombs of Syracuse. This elaborately ornate representation of *The Winter's Tale* was received with great applause; the revival ran for upwards of one hundred nights. It was very beautiful and interesting in its way; the greatest pains had been taken to perfect all the details and accessories of the performance; but the beauty and the interest did not arise naturally out of Shakespeare's comedy; the painstaking seemed in truth altogether apart from the purpose of playing. The Leontes and Hermione of Mr. and Mrs. Kean were supported by the Polixenes of Mr. Ryder, the Autolycus of Harley, and the Perdita of Miss Carlotta Leclercq. For the first time, Florizel was personated by an actress—Miss Heath. Mamillius, it may be noted, was represented by Miss Ellen Terry, a child of very tender age; Miss Kate Terry appearing as the servant to the old shepherd.

PERSONALLY CONDUCTED.

IX.

WHAT would happen, I ask myself, not without an inward qualm, if anything were to go wrong with the "points" of this funny little "*Chemin de fer Funiculaire*," that descends well-like from high-perched Lausanne to its little lake-side supplement at Ouchy? It is rather an interesting question, and puts itself to you somewhat importunately as you look, so to speak, from the bottom of your rapidly descending bucket, and see the ascending bucket coming as rapidly up in a direct line from under you. You are within say fifty yards of the seemingly inevitable collision, when, suddenly, without any apparent suggestion or impulse from without, the two trains seem to become aware of each other's approach. There is no clamour

of whistling, or bugling, or signalling of any kind; no waving of red flags or green flags; no velveteen or corduroy porter sitting upon the lever which is to shunt you, it is to be hoped, out of the coming danger. Yet somehow, just at the critical moment, your carriage takes a little turn to the left, the ascending carriage simultaneously flies off to the right, and in another minute we have rattled past each other, and have filed back right and left into the single track again.

It is certainly a very pretty little operation. All the prettier perhaps for that slight titillation of the nerves which it is so decidedly calculated to produce. But isn't it just possible that some day the ingenious self-acting apparatus may somehow omit to "function," and catastrophe be the result? Mr. Neville says no, and points out to me, that there is really no apparatus at all; that, as a matter of fact, though the rails of the up and down line are laid on the same sleepers, the left-hand rail of each just two or three inches on the inner side of the right-hand rail of the other, the two roads are really quite distinct, though not quite separate, throughout. They separate altogether halfway down to allow the trains to pass, an ingenious arrangement of little upright drums keeping the rope by which they are raised and lowered in its proper place round the curves. But there is no exchange of metals, nor are any points required; and when the train which has just passed us comes down again, and meets ours on its way up, each will turn to its right hand instead of its left, and return along the same road by which it came. Asked the reason of this curious complication, which surely can hardly have been devised with the mere design of startling nervous travellers, Mr. Neville replies briefly:

"Cheaper—Tunnel."

And as he speaks we drop into darkness again, and I have just time to realise the fact that a well which is only just big enough to hold one bucket is thus cleverly made to serve perfectly well for two, and pay Swiss thrift a high mental compliment accordingly.

The Rope Railway is indeed a curious little work altogether, with its mile or so of well-like, almost perpendicular-looking tunnel, its open crossing place, its two little stations each exactly the same distance from its respective terminus, so that one stoppage may serve for both, its

neat little omnibus carriages, and its big cellar under the upper terminus, where the "handle" is. Something like a handle it is too! Fancy a huge "drum" close upon twenty yards round, with a bright steel cable wound nearly a hundred times round it, and a mighty water-engine to wind and unwind it, with a smart little three hundred horse power steam-engine to take its place when the water fails, as it sometimes does. The cable looks terribly slight, too, in spite of its hundred and fourteen strands. But steel ropes are strong, and, moreover, as the civil guard points out to us, the bottom carriage of each train has a tremendous break, that by the mere turning of a handle lifts the carriage off its wheels altogether, and transforms it bodily into a sledge. So I suppose we should stop short of the lake even if it did give way.

As it is we stop rather shorter of it than we could perhaps have wished. It is warm up yonder on the broad terrace that overhangs the town, where the wide panorama of sunny vineyard, and red-roofed villa, and still pale blue lake, and rugged snow-crested mountain, spreads itself mile upon mile in front and on either hand; where the broad-leaved planes give a fragrant shelter, and the breeze from the distant glaciers rushes through them and fans you pleasantly with its cool breath. But down here in Ouchy the shade is gone, the breeze seems somehow to have lost its power, and the hot noonday sun beats down with almost tropical fierceness. We have somehow too got hold of a false idea that the terminus of the Rope Railway must needs be close to the pier from which we are to embark for Bouveret, and have brought various small articles with us which might just as well have been left behind. So when we find that we have a good half mile to tramp in the broiling sun, and over a road made entirely of loose shingle, or some substitute for it a little more dreadful than the original, we begin to wish that we had let the Rope Railway alone, and had come down like the rest of our party in the hotel omnibus. However, there is no help for it now. The task has to be done, and done quickly, for yonder is the boat steaming swiftly across the lake towards us from Evian. If we do not bestir ourselves we shall be too late, and shall find ourselves left behind, luggageless, shepherdless, forlorn. Mr. Neville, it must be confessed, does not seem to regard this contingency

in anything like the aspect in which it presents itself to us—positively proposes, indeed, that we shall deliberately break our bonds, give the shepherd the slip, and take our own way henceforth. At which audacious suggestion poor Mrs. Crumpelhorne, crimson, breathless, crunching desperately through the heavy shingle on tender feet quite unaccustomed to such cruel experiences, stops short for a moment, and plying vigorously the big black fan that hangs from her ample girdle, looks up questioningly at me.

"My dear—really—do you think—"

But what I think matters very little. So far as Dick and I are concerned, our choice in the matter is the choice of the historic Hobson. If we desert our shepherd, who will fold us by night or feed us by day? I give one good gulp, banish the pleasant picture from my mental eyes, seize poor Mrs. Crumpelhorne by the arm, and hurry her off once more. And so, just as our anxious shepherd has given us up, and is joining the rest of his flock in despair, we exchange the crunching stones for the comparatively smooth planks of the pier, and scrambling across the gangway at the very moment it is about to be withdrawn, find ourselves safe on board the steamer.

And two delicious hours we have as we glide along over the blue waters, past Vevey, and Clarens, and Montreux, and Chillon. We are not enthusiastic over the famous castle. In the eyes of by far the greater number of us, indeed, it is not famous at all, for we hear of it, as we see it, for the first time. Miss Lydier, certainly, is quite prepared to gush freely about the poor dear prisoner, you know. Unfortunately it is some years since her memory was exercised in the way of learning by rote, and the quotation she was so carefully getting up this morning from the ragged Byron in the salon of our hotel does not turn out quite correctly. She has hardly time to inform us how her "hair grew white in a single night," when a horrified "Oh, Miss Lydier!" bursts simultaneously from the lips of the two improvable young ladies. Poor Miss Lydier's anxiously anticipated effect is a little marred, but she is not going to give up without a struggle. Grey, was it? Really? But then she is quite sure it was a single night, and how will the improvable young ladies make that rhyme? Which rash line of defence completes her discomfiture—and our own. For the improvable young ladies

jump promptly at the opportunity offered by the question, and for the moment it seems likely that we shall be favoured with a recital of the entire poem, which even as the improvable ones give it, with a thoughtful omission of the stops, is likely to last some time.

But at the very beginning of the second stanza, Checksuit, who is not troubled with any superfluous delicacy, breaks in with the demand, if the three parties had seven "pillers" between them what more did they want? And before the improvable ones are able to collect their scattered wits even so far as to understand the general laugh that follows, their opportunity is finally lost. All this time the citizen in the goatee retains a thoughtful expression, and as Mr. Dorling now puts in an appearance from the saloon below, where he has been refreshing the inner shepherd with a slight luncheon, demands of him whether that's a place that oughter be seen?

And here Mr. Dorling is in a little difficulty. It will hardly do to admit that our programme has deliberately ignored any really orthodox feature of our route; yet to pooh-pooh Chillon and its prisoner altogether is hardly practicable. The castle is interesting, he admits, and a good many people visit it, but not so many now, the shepherd thinks, as formerly. And has the citizen observed the change in the colour of the water? That curious cloudy white that spreads out just here into the lake is caused by the snowy current of the Rhone, which, as the citizen may perhaps have heard—and so the skilful shepherd glides gently off into a safer topic. Still the citizen in the goatee is not quite happy. He follows carefully all that the wily shepherd tells him of the effect of half-melted snow upon the stream; of the current that is supposed to flow unmingled all through the long Geneva lake; of the gradual shoaling of the upper portion of the lake from deposit, and the vast depth of its general waters; and the rush with which the stream flows out at the lower end, and all the rest. But through it all there is in his mind an evident sense of a duty unperformed; and as the boat at length sweeps round to the Bouveret landing-place, and the rest of the party throng towards the gangway, he remains alone by the opposite bulwark still looking out towards the now distant castle. Then a thought strikes him.

"Wal—guess I've seen it," he says aloud, and turns away satisfied.

And now we in our turn make an unpleasant discovery. We left Ouchy at twelve o'clock, and all through the lake journey it has really been much too lovely on deck to think of going below for anything so mundane as luncheon. Not, I am bound to say, that the majority of our party have fallen into this error. It is only our own especial little party who have weakly preferred Ferney to fricandeau, and now we pay the penalty. It is in vain that we scramble backwards and forwards in the broiling sun over the little wilderness of empty rails, and in and out among the handful of apparently deserted sheds which form the French terminal station of the great Simplon line. No buffet can we find, and by-and-by the shepherd, who has been transacting business in one of the remote sheds with the gold-laced chef de gare, comes out to enquire what is the matter, and at once informs us that there is none. Fortunately there is no hurry here about the despatch of passengers, so we have still some twenty minutes left in which to scramble back on the boat again, and repair the omission as best we may.

And now we have a couple of hours of about the slowest railway travelling I have ever accomplished. As nearly as we can make out we are about five-and-twenty miles from our night's halting-place at Martigny; but we start at half-past two, and do not arrive till just half-past four—or twelve miles and a half an hour! And it is hot, too. Oh, how hot! With just wind enough to keep the clouds of dust and the masses of coal-smoke drifting comfortably along by our open windows, through which they pass leisurely in a steady stream. When we do at last reach Martigny, and plough our way through the deep white dust to our hotel, we are, as Checksuit puts it, just "done to a turn," and much too keen after anything in the shape of soap and water, to have even a thought to spare for the situation of our rooms. Then, when we have "dug ourselves out," we redescend into the shady little garden behind the hotel till dinner shall be ready.

And, by-the-way, why does not some daring proprietor introduce the innovation of an *al fresco* dinner? It is not cool even here under the thick trees; but then, in this stewpan of a valley, I don't suppose it is or can be cool anywhere. But it

is certainly incomparably cooler than in the low-ceilinged, crowded, stifling *salle-à-manger*, in which we presently simmer for an hour or two, and where the sharp stroke on the nape of your unlucky neck from the half-opened window a foot behind you just serves to emphasise the tropical atmosphere in which the rest of you is rapidly being raised to a considerably higher temperature than that of the various dishes set before you. I am pretty sure, at all events, that if the thermometer had ranged but fifteen or twenty degrees lower, the direct effects upon our tempers alone, to say nothing of the diminished demand for alcoholic support in one shape or another, would at the least have gone far towards preserving us from such a very near approach to a battle royal, as this evening characterised our proceedings.

The first little collision takes place upon the question of the hour for starting. Hitherto we have always had a railway or steamboat time-table to regulate our movements. But to-morrow there is nothing to guide us but our own sweet wills. And of these there are just five-and-forty.

I have been wondering what it was that for some time past has been shadowing our shepherd's brow with an additional and apparently altogether uncalled-for cloud of care. Now I know. Poor shepherd! He dines in this same drafty vapour bath as nearly as possible once a fortnight through the season. This is, I believe, either the fifth or sixth time that he has encountered the ordeal this year. And each time it is in charge of a fresh flock; and each time, as he and they emerge from the torture-chamber with clamorous symptoms of rheumatics without and dyspepsia within, he has the same pleasant task to perform—to bring them all to a general agreement as to the time they shall get up next morning.

The question is hardly put before half-a-dozen different starting times are proposed, covering very nearly a double journey of the hands round the clock. The shepherd himself, carefully biding his time till the various suggestions have had a fair opportunity of neutralising each other, points out that in such weather as the present, the only pleasant time for ascending the pass is the cool of the early morning, and mentions five o'clock as a practical sort of hour. This is promptly met by Miss Lydier, who, without going

needlessly into the merits of the case, declares sans phrase that nobody shall get her out of bed at four o'clock in the morning, and so Mr. Dorling need not think it. Whereon the rest of us also take to expressing our own personal predilections with similar directness, and our audience, which by this time includes pretty well the whole "non-conducted" clientèle of the hotel, is treated to a wrangle of some duration and considerable asperity. Finally, seven o'clock is decided upon as a compromise, which, as apparently it pleases nobody, has at least the advantage of not adopting the views of any one member of the party to the prejudice of the rest.

And then we apply ourselves to the grand difficulty—the mode of conveyance. In this, fortunately, our little party have no personal concern. We are among those who, as our Excursionist somewhat haughtily puts it, "choose to travel by carriage," and have already paid our half-crowns for the additional accommodation. Some dozen or dozen and a half more have decided to do the same; but there are still a couple of dozen or more, headed by the gentleman from Manchester, who decline to commit themselves to the extra payment, and purpose crossing the pass by means of the "mules and guides," which, as our Excursionist tells us, are to be "in readiness for the passage of the Tête Noire," and the cost of which is included in our passage-money. But here an unexpected difficulty arises. We have not noticed, or if we have noticed, have certainly not appreciated, a little sentence which follows the above announcement, and which informs us that "each passenger will be entitled to one mule or one guide," and that "as the proportion of guides to mules need not exceed one to three, very comfortable and convenient arrangements may be made." When we come now to reduce this pleasantly sounding theory to practice, we find that the "very comfortable and convenient arrangement" by which a gross contingent of twenty-four guides and mules are to be distributed among the same number of passengers, in the proportion of three mules to a guide, is that at least six of the twenty-four passengers shall walk!

What is the final result of the uproar which follows this little discovery I do not know, and I have not the courage to enquire. The storm is raging in its full

fury as we slip quietly away, and do our best to cool ourselves by a leisurely stroll in the dusk of the hot close evening. It is raging still when we presently return, a little more hotly, I think, than when we started. It floats up in little gusts through our windows as we retire for the night, and even with my dreams are mingled the harsh notes of Manchester's as round denunciations of the whole affair as an imposition and a robbery; the sarcastic nasal enquiries of the gentleman in the goatee as to the value in the European market of a fourth part of a Swiss guide; the steady undercurrent of assurances from the less eloquent but equally determined main body that none of them mean to walk, at all events; and the shrill tones of the mischievous Checksuit always ready with some impish piece of "chaff" to stir up the turmoil again whenever it gives signs of a momentary relaxation. It is settled at last somehow, for when the first grey streaks of dawn come stealing in at my window next morning, the Committee of Ways and Means has broken up, and is replaced by a party of independent tourists, who are wisely availing themselves of their independence by starting for the mountain while the day is yet fresh and cool, and the first rosy flush not yet pink upon the distant mountain-tops.

So far as sleep goes we assuredly might just as well have been upon the road ourselves, for even as they start two towzled heads are thrust from neighbouring windows, and the shout goes forth that their owners, too, won't be long after them. Half an hour later "Bob," separated from me by the thickness of a half-inch deal door and a paper partition, throws, apparently, a pillow, or some gentle reminder of the kind, at the head of "Billy," his sleeping-room fellow. Billy promptly retaliates; the result being a scrimmage which threatens to bring them both bodily into my apartment, and which does very shortly set the irascible old gentleman on my right thundering at the half-inch door which guards my slumbers on the other side with the demand when I (!) mean to stop that uncelestial row.

Then I, in my turn, begin to think it high time to get up; and a very pleasant little stroll I have with Mr. Neville, in the morning air, which even down here in the valley is fresh and almost cool. Then half-past six comes, and we drop in by twos and threes to our early breakfast, and the

irascible old gentleman insists on knowing the author of the uncelestial row by which he was aroused at such untimely hours, and refuses to be pacified till Mr. Dorling has ascertained for him the name of the occupant of No. 555. So the waiter is summoned, the question put, and amid a breathless silence the audacious disturber of the old gentleman's peace is pronounced to be—Me!

Then I realise, on a small scale, the feelings of Iphigenia, and do not find them by any means pleasant. There is no doubt about it. My immolation has saved the expedition, which, after the little hurricane of last night, was in imminent danger of falling a prey to the winds and waves. It is rescued, however, and at my expense. The shout of laughter which breaks from the entire party is as hearty as it is universal. Even Mr. Neville cannot refrain from a momentary smile, though it quickly vanishes under the shower of delicate "chaff" which follows, and in which, of course, Checksuit leads the way with a preternaturally serious face.

"Well I never, miss! Shouldn't ha' thought it of you. 'Ang me if I should!"

As for protesting or explaining, I very soon realise the folly of any attempt of that kind. Indeed, I have quite enough to do to moderate the rapidly-growing indignation of my two champions, Dick and Mr. Neville, who by no means appreciate the freedom with which the wit of the party is lavished at my expense. If good old Mrs. Crumpelhorne had not come to the rescue, with a declaration that we should all be late, and bidding Dick look after Nellie, herself seized upon Mr. Neville, and given him a plain straightforward lecture upon the absolute necessity of keeping the peace, I am afraid the newly-restored harmony of the community would have been disturbed again almost as soon as it is renewed. They don't mean any harm, she assures him, smilingly. And after all, you know, it was we ourselves who elected to travel in their society; and when you are in Rome, though it isn't perhaps necessary to do all that the Romans do, it is surely what Mr. Neville would call bad form—isn't that the proper slang nowadays?—to quarrel with them for doing it?

Whereon Mr. Agamemnon Neville takes one final tug at his moustache, smoothes his kingly brow, and promises submission. So when, as we are presently arranging our carriage parties, Checksuit urgently

implores Mr. Dorling to put him between me and the irascible old gentleman, "for fear of accidents," Mr. Neville remains serenely unconscious of that young gentleman's existence. When even Bob and Billy, who up to this time have led a perfectly undistinguished existence, chiefly devoted to the discovery of latent food-resources at every stopping-place along the route, are emboldened by the secret consciousness of their own complicity in this "jolly lark," to try their 'prentice-hands at a tiny joke, he contents himself with bestowing upon them, through his glass, a solemnly questioning stare. Which, however, is quite sufficient to ensure their prompt collapse, and send them off to recruit from their discomfiture by a furtive "tuck-in" at the remains of the cold omelette.

It is nearer eight than seven before our long string of carriages gets fairly under weigh. The mule party are off long before us; Checksuit—who has lingered with the amiable object of driving the irascible old gentleman into a fit of apoplexy, by persistent offers of exchanging places if he is in any fear of me, till the guide, at a nod from the watchful shepherd, has fairly taken the matter into his own hands and led him off by the bridle—amusing himself as he goes by furtive prods with his alpenstock at the hind quarters of the mule next in front of him, who being apparently ticklish, responds with a vigorous lash out, which renders the seat of the gentleman from Manchester rather precarious. We unluckily have not only ourselves to dispose of, but have our baggage, which is, if possible, an even more serious matter. The quaint little wagons, with two cross seats hung inside for our personal accommodation, do not have much room for portmanteaus and carpet-bags, and considerable ingenuity has to be displayed in distributing the load. Before we are away the sun is high, and the heat of the day in the close valley fairly begun. We are pretty closely packed, too, at first, for as all of us except Mrs. Crumpelhorne mean to walk up the greater portion of the pass, we have not thought it worth while to separate, so have packed the whole five of us into the space intended for four. However, we soon reach the point where the new carriage-road separates itself from the ancient mule-track, and here we pull up and take to our feet.

We find it harder work than the Brünig. There we had a fine smooth

road—not level, certainly, but by no means steep, and as good walking as Regent Street. Here, even the carriage-road, or what serves as such, is little more than a track of loose stones and dust, through whose rattling depths our two fat horses, one in the shafts, the other tied on outrigger-fashion at his side, scramble and pant as they drag after them the rough little wagon, which, rough and sturdy as it is, will surely collapse before long, and consign poor Mrs. Crumpelhorne to a stony grave? As for the old mule-path along which we, the walkers, take our way, both for shortness and to avoid the clouds of dust stirred up by grinding wheels and scrambling horses, that is more like a dried-up watercourse than a path, and, as the citizen in the goatee observes, “a regular high-pressure bone-grindin’ consarn at that.” The citizen’s actual metaphor indeed is plainer-spoken, and has reference to the production of flour; but the general idea is the same.

Then, too, the sun at every step is getting hotter, and in the close narrow valley there is not a breath of air to stir so much as one of the silvery birch leaves, that do not even quiver as we pass. As our shepherd justly says, we ought to have been on the fresh mountain-top by now; and even Miss Lydier, I fancy, begins to repent the independence which so successfully asserted itself last night. However, as we ascend, and along this steep path we do ascend pretty rapidly, it grows fresher by degrees, if not cooler. And at every turn, as we mount higher and higher, the long Rhone Valley opens more clearly out at our feet, till we can trace the river winding along it with the tall mountain ranges on either hand—those to the left capped thickly with snow—for fully forty or fifty miles right away to the baths of Leuk and the foot of the Gemmi Pass, across which those opposition Coozite people made their way yesterday. There the valley itself trends away a little to the right, to where at Brigue the railway ends, and the Italian road turns short off to the southward over the Simplon. But as we near the summit of the Forclaz, our range of vision stretches farther and farther over the great peaks of the Bernese Oberland, till far away in the dim distance, full seventy miles off as the crow flies, we catch once more a last distant glimpse of the white crown of the Alpine queen herself, the beautiful Jungfrau.

ALL OR NOTHING.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF “A HOUSE OF CARDS,” “GRIFFITH’S DOUBLE,” &c. &c.

CHAPTER XIV. MAKING ACQUAINTANCE.

THE circumstances under which the oddly-constituted party at Bury House had met together, rendered it more than ordinarily probable that each member of it should discuss the others in private meditation or in tête-à-tête confidences with one of those there. There was something more in the meeting between Julia Carmichael and Sir Wilfrid Esdaile than the openly avowed interest of love on the girl’s part and friendship on the man’s for a common object. There was Dunstan’s place in the mutual curiosity with which they regarded each other. Julia wanted to learn all Sir Wilfrid could tell her about Dunstan, without letting him know anything about her cousin’s love-story, and Sir Wilfrid wanted to discover whether Miss Carmichael knew anything of the unfortunate meeting at Southampton, which had, to say the least of it, introduced an element of awkwardness into the relations of all concerned. The Misses Sandilands were untroubled by any doubleness of motive in the heartfelt pleasure with which they welcomed their guest, and discussed with each other his looks, his bearing, and all the small incidents of so eventful a day. It is not uncommon for persons who lead very calm and routine lives—of the kind which other people would describe as horribly dull—when they step outside their bounds, to do so with more freedom and less misgiving than lookers-on would suppose possible. This was the case with the old ladies. Their guest was a young man of rank and fashion; no one at all like him had ever visited Bury House before; the only society they had to offer him was that of two girls, of whom one was as little accustomed as themselves to young men of rank and fashion. But they had no misgivings respecting what they should do for Sir Wilfrid’s entertainment during six days, and whether their cook was up to the mark of his requirements. In a short time they had satisfied themselves that he was just what his frank and kindly acceptance of their invitation, added to John’s praises of him, had led them to expect, and they felt perfectly easy in their orderly, respectable, unimaginative minds.

To Janet Monroe the accident of Sir Wilfrid Esdaile's presence at Bury House was unimportant. She had never heard his name before, and though she would perhaps have preferred that the first hours of her return under such altered circumstances to her former home should not have been accompanied by so great a demand on her cheerfulness as that imposed by the presence of two strangers, she hardly gave the matter a thought. The concentration of her own thoughts, the division between her external and her internal life, were too complete to be affected by the casual presence of other people. Julia Carmichael seemed to her a lively, nice-looking girl, on whose face might be read full contentment with her lot. Of her history Janet knew nothing; it would doubtless be a pleasant one to know, if acquaintance were to ripen into confidence on Julia's part, and she should choose to put in words the smiling hopefulness that brightened her eyes and tuned her voice.

So much and no more thought did Janet Monroe give to the two new acquaintances to whom the day had introduced her, when, half reclining on the wide window-seat of the former schoolroom, she gazed out into the still autumnal night on the peaceful scene beneath. With nightfall the wind had died away, and not a leaf of the dry foliage still remaining on the twin elms stirred; the rustling of the young owls in their nest in the ivy on the gable that rose above the broad window was audible, and the gentle murmur of a little stream which ran under a rustic bridge between the kitchen-garden and the orchard. The moon was high in the steel-coloured sky, and the cold radiance was very clear. Janet Monroe gazed long upon the quiet scene, once so familiar, still so unchanged; so commonplace in its features, and presenting so strong a contrast to the broad lands and stately tenure of Bevis. She had opened wide the casement, and extinguished her candles, and with a shawl folded round her, was engaged in the usually unprofitable and regretful task of retrospection, whose course had led her far away from Bury House and its inmates, when she was recalled to the present by the odour of tobacco which came floating in through the casement, and, catching her unaccustomed nostrils, made her sneeze. She looked out and upwards, and perceived that the casement above her own, up

in the ivy, and with the owls in its near neighbourhood, was also thrown back; thereupon, she softly closed the window.

"They have put Sir Wilfrid Esdaile in the long room," she said to herself, "and he is smoking out of the window, like Jim Crawley."

Janet had guessed rightly. The intuition of his hostesses had not extended to the providing of a smoking-room for Sir Wilfrid; and he had resorted to the expedient of the unhappy nephew of the immortal Miss Crawley, on that memorable occasion when he fought his cousin Pitt, the pamphleteer and diplomatist, "without the gloves." But Sir Wilfrid Esdaile was not only smoking a cigar at his open casement, with all the zest of a man who has been deprived of that solace for several hours, he was also thinking of the identical person who detected him. The long room seemed to its new occupant a charming, quaint, old-fashioned apartment, with its chintz hangings—real, legitimate chintz, no modern imitation, but a pattern in which the five colours duly asserted themselves; its venerable embossed Japanese screens dating from a period when romance and mystery still shrouded the land of the Rising Sun, and its old-fashioned toilet-table with painted wreaths and allegorical mirror-frame. The scent of sweet lavender was in the air, and the luxury of scrupulous cleanliness was everywhere.

Sir Wilfrid had meant to write a few lines to Edward Dunstan that night, but he did not feel inclined; he would do that to-morrow. Dunstan would be amused at the notion of his being domiciled with the Misses Sandilands, and two young ladies, both old acquaintances of Edward's, if indeed by this time he had come back to a mood which would permit him to be amused at anything. Meantime, Sir Wilfrid put his impressions of the day together, while he indulged in a cigar carefully smoked out of window. His impressions were, on the whole, very pleasing; he, no more than the old ladies, felt any solicitude as to how he should get through the six days of his visit. It was not in his nature to suffer from ennui; he had all the accommodatingness of good health and good temper, and a decided taste for novelty. He was not thinking about himself at all, as he leaned out of the casement up among the ivy, and he dismissed with but brief consideration the ostensible objects of his visit to Bury House, to dwell

upon the unexpected element of interest that had been imported into it.

It was not only that Janet Monroe had seemed to him a beautiful woman; that would not have impressed him so much, for he had seen many beautiful women in many countries, but that there was something about her unlike all the other beautiful women he had ever seen, something which put her beauty as it were aside, and out of the question, and removed herself from the level of the ordinary world. He could find no word for it but the first that had come into his thoughts, only a few minutes after his first sight of her; he could by no means force himself to think of her in relation to the little he knew of her past history, or in any comparison or company with even the fairest women of his acquaintance or those whom he believed to be the best. Only half a day had gone over since he had seen her face for the first time; half a day, during which he had spoken but little with her; and there had been no time for the dispersion of the very earliest newness of acquaintance between himself and her, and already Sir Wilfrid Esdaile saw in her face and heard in her voice something that was not seen or heard by the others. When he turned his thoughts for a moment from the great charm of her, it was to try and recall precisely what Dunstan had said about her, what was her share in the strange story of those occurrences at Bevis that had suddenly become invested with a tenfold interest for him. He could remember nothing but a trivial, almost a slighting allusion to her, and recalling it, he felt about Miss Monroe as he had felt about John Sandilands—a sense of wonder and discontent at the contradictory ordering of the fate of human beings in this world. According to the little he knew of her story, destiny was very hard upon this girl; if dependence was no longer her lot, at least it lay in extreme obscurity and companionship of the narrowest kind. A life bounded by Bury House, with only a regretful memory of Bevis to vary it! He had been talking of his travels during the evening, but without any mention of Captain Dunstan, and the change of her expression to a bright eagerness, the interest in the tone of her voice as she put the few pertinent questions that showed him how familiar she was, by the medium of books, with the scenes of which he was speaking, recurred now to his memory, making him think impatiently of the fetters that were on

her life, and the absolute freedom of self-disposal that belonged to him. Captain Dunstan's mention of Miss Monroe had been so very slight that Sir Wilfrid could not make quite sure whether he had understood him to say that he was personally acquainted with her. "Quite a lady, you know, and all that sort of thing," was as nearly as he could remember what had been said, and the phrase seemed to Sir Wilfrid ludicrously inapplicable. "Quite a lady," condescendingly said about that benign and lofty creature; what could Dunstan have been thinking about? He was an uncommonly good fellow, and very far from a fool, but he certainly was not a trustworthy observer of women. To think that he would rave and sulk, almost break his heart, and altogether curse his fortune about Laura Chumleigh, and talk of Miss Monroe as "quite a lady!" Sir Wilfrid Esdaile calmed down his irritation with his friend's obtuseness by making up his mind that he could never have seen Miss Monroe; he must have spoken merely on hearsay; the careless mention of a dependent by a disagreeable old woman, as no doubt Mrs. Drummond had been.

Janet Monroe was the first to appear at the breakfast-table on the following morning, and she made use of the opportunity to suggest to Miss Susan Sandilands that Sir Wilfrid Esdaile would be made happier by being licensed to smoke in the porch. He came into the room immediately after she had spoken, and Miss Susan addressed him with the gravest apologies, and the unnecessary assurance that it was their being so ignorant of the ways of gentlemen that had led to his having had to forego his cigar on the previous day; "but," she added, "if he had only mentioned it——"

Sir Wilfrid thanked her, and Miss Susan proceeded to inform him that it was Miss Monroe who had reminded her.

"Indeed," said Sir Wilfrid, turning to Janet with a smile—he had already discovered that she looked even more angelic than before in the light of the early day—"I am very much indebted to you; though I think I should have asked leave on my own account, as Miss Sandilands is bent on spoiling me. But how did you find out that I smoked?"

"The scent of your cigar came in at my window last night," she answered. "Don't apologise. I happen to like it very much."

So she had been looking out upon the same scene at the same hour that had witnessed his meditations of the night

before! What an absurd satisfaction the discovery afforded him! This was a very little incident, but somehow it seemed to make them better acquainted. Sir Wilfrid took his place beside Miss Monroe. Julia made her appearance shortly afterwards, and the three younger members of the party discussed with great animation a programme of very mild amusement for the day; while the two old ladies beamed on them with smiles of the serenest satisfaction.

Janet remembered all the points of view to which Julia proposed that they should conduct Sir Wilfrid; they had been the scenes of the excursions of her school-days—the ruins, and the mill-race, the elm avenue, the old grange, with the moat, which was a favourite resort for picnic-parties, the remains of the Saxon church, and a couple of show places, open to the public on certain days of the week. Julia was amused at the notion of taking Sir Wilfrid to behold these grand spectacles in the unusual character of one of the public.

"There," she said after she had scribbled a list of what she called "the lions" on a card, and was checking it off on her fingers, "I think that is about all we can do for you; and we must not run too recklessly through our resources. We'll do the elm avenue this afternoon. The morning we shall devote to the reception and installation of Miss Monroe's piano."

Sir Wilfrid agreed gaily, and then said to Julia:

"You know my ignorance of the geography of Suffolk. Is there, by any chance, in this part of the county a place called The Chantry?"

Julia could not tell him, but Miss Sandilands said:

"No; The Chantry is on the other side of B——."

"Ah, then, I need not trouble myself about it at present. I can get there from Bevis."

Miss Monroe turned her head quickly with a look of enquiry, but did not speak. He answered the look.

"I am going on from hence to Bevis. I am to join Captain Dunstan there on the 10th."

"You know Captain Dunstan, then?"

"Very well indeed. We have been travelling together; I was with him in Ceylon."

There was no change in Janet Monroe's face perceptible to the others, but Sir Wilfrid Esdaile knew in an instant that there was something agitating to her in

the allusion, and he immediately began to explain to Julia who the people at The Chantry were, and how he was charged with the ugliest set of shell ornaments to be had in all Ceylon for a good deal of money, for Miss Ainslie.

Sir Wilfrid Esdaile became interesting to Miss Monroe from the moment she found that there was any link of association between him and Bevis, and the circumstance rendered the companionship of the two girls and the young man all the pleasanter and easier because there was no division of subjects between them; the themes on which Sir Wilfrid could discourse with the best certainty of acceptance by Julia were interesting also to Miss Monroe. It was during their afternoon excursion to the elm avenue, as the three walked under the great arch formed by the noble trees, and which stretches for more than a mile in extent, with broad grassy paths on either side of the wide, smooth road, that Sir Wilfrid told the story of Dunstan's reception of Mr. Cleeve's letter, and the sudden revulsion that had been caused by the turn of the wheel of fortune in his favour. And when he had told it, Julia asked the question that he had been wishing to ask, but which, from a sense that it must betray at least negligence on his friend's part, he had not liked to put to Miss Monroe:

"You know Captain Dunstan, of course?"

"Yes. He passed some time at Bevis on three occasions since I went to live there."

"I never saw a man more amazed at anything," said Esdaile. "He declares that he cannot in the least account for Mrs. Drummond's change of purpose. He spoke with great fairness, I thought, under all the circumstances, both of the admiral and of her, but he maintained that she never liked him when she had opportunities of seeing him, and could not have changed her mind subsequently. I daresay it was a case of mutual misunderstanding," added Sir Wilfrid, closely observant of the flush on Miss Monroe's cheek and the look of distress in her eyes, "and that if Mrs. Drummond had lived until Dunstan's return to England, she would have acknowledged him as her heir. It was certainly an act of justice."

"It was, indeed," said Miss Monroe, "an act of simple, absolute justice. Let me assure you, as you are interested about it, being Captain Dunstan's friend, that in so far as I was in Mrs. Drummond's confidence, I can answer for her kindly

feelings towards him. When you are with him at Bevis I hope you will tell him this, and—and induce him to let her wishes be observed in certain things that the people who are there can tell him about."

There was a slight trembling in her voice, and she had walked on unconsciously, while speaking, with a quicker step. Julia was regarding her closely, and with approbation.

"Let me assure you," said Sir Wilfrid, quickly, "that Dunstan is the last person in the world to be insensible to anything of that kind. He really is such a very good fellow, Miss Monroe. I fancy you don't know much of him. I daresay he did not show to advantage at Bevis; and I am sure he would be more than ready to acknowledge that it was his own fault. But I don't know a finer fellow really, and full of heart. I am sure he would be most scrupulous in carrying out any wishes of Mrs. Drummond's, and only too grateful to anyone who would inform him of them."

She had turned her head slightly away, and she said, without looking towards him:

"I believe the housekeeper at Bevis could tell Captain Dunstan anything of the kind which he might wish to know."

Her tone of extreme reserve prevented Sir Wilfrid from asking her any one of the questions that suggested themselves, and he began to speak of his journey home from Ceylon with Dunstan.

On the return of the walking party to Bury House Miss Monroe withdrew to her own room, and was not again visible until dinner. Nothing could be less exciting, less eventful than the passing away of that day, which ended with some music and a rubber—the latter for the special gratification of the old ladies. Julia played whist very respectably, having learned the art in order to come to the aid of her uncle, whose generally thwarted existence enjoyed the one great alleviation of whist. Miss Monroe knew nothing about cards, and she sat apart at the piano while the others played, touching the keys softly and dreamily, and producing what one at least of the little party would have been ready to pronounce "wonderful melodies." Sir Wilfrid Esdaile was not greatly in the habit of self-contemplation; he rarely wondered much at finding things as they happened to be, but lived his life after an easy-going fashion, fulfilling with

tolerable fidelity the philosophical counsel of Mrs. Gamp, "Take 'em as they come and as they go;" and thus he did not think of the oddity of his actual situation as he sat playing whist for love with two old ladies and a girl in a quiet old country house. The situation amused Julia not a little, and she promised herself to make it very amusing in the recital to her constant correspondent, John, who particularly admired her style of letter-writing. To judge by Sir Wilfrid's good will, he might never have known or desired any livelier or more exciting pastime; and if there had been by that time ever so small a portion of the hearts of the old ladies unwon by their nephew's friend, they would have surrendered at discretion when the second day of his visit at Bury House came to a close.

The tracing back of effects to their causes, the contemplation of the links in the chain of circumstances, are processes more frequently written or talked about than actually carried out. We shrink from them. They go on sometimes in the recesses of our brain, involuntarily, and they make us impatient, for pain, regret, repining, are their invariable accompaniments. When we disentangle all the threads of the "has been" we are forced to think of the "might have been;" we are confronted with the "if," and know how true is the definition of it as "a jailor to bring forth some monstrous malefactor." It befell two of the three guests at Bury House on that quiet, uneventful day to be forced to look back upon it afterwards with keen regret and wonder when the time had come to each of them—not the same time, nor with any relation between their respective reminiscences—to think of what might have been, and what might have been averted, if—

But this was very far off, and meantime Sir Wilfrid Esdaile had advanced another step towards his fate, and in friendly intimacy with Julia Carmichael. On the side of each there was a point of reserve. Julia said nothing to Sir Wilfrid Esdaile of her knowledge of the sad little love-story of Edward Dunstan and her cousin Laura—that was her cousin's secret; and Sir Wilfrid Esdaile said nothing of the meeting at Southampton, of the episode which supplied the reverse turn of the wheel of Dunstan's fortune—that was his friend's secret.

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